Letters

Uncomfortable doubts

It should be obvious that the critics [of the Warren Report] ("The assassination that will not die" by James R. Phelan, Nov. 23) now constitute a sort of grassroots movement of the American people. As we become more aware of the contradictory facts of the [Kennedy] case (many of which Phelan did not even mention), of the implausible conclusions drawn by the official investigators, of the visual evidence of the Zapruder film, dissatisfaction with the Warren Report naturally grows. It is not a question of our being prey to the absurd theories and irresponsible polemics of the critics. Most of us cannot offer alternative interpretations, but simply have the uncomfortable feeling that we do not know the whole truth and that the Warren Commission has been guilty of what Phelan charges the critics [with]: "Presentation of theory as . . . fact, and straining after conclusions that violate evidence, logic and common sense."

KRISTIN W. HENRY
Ann Arbor, Mich.

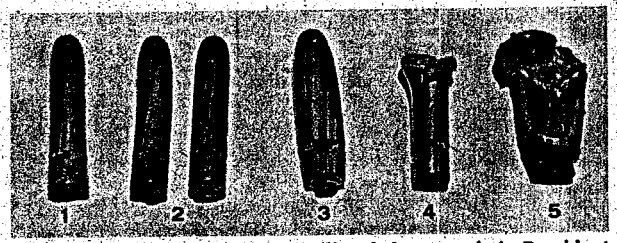
Bullet proof?

The New York Times's prejudices and biases concerning the Warren Commission Report are so obvious as to make any reasonably intelligent and objective individual quickly recognize James R. Phelan's article for what it is, namely, the latest whitewash attempt in a long-continuing series of deliberate cover-ups by Warren Commission defenders, apologists, other Government sycophants, and some members of the news media.

Mr. Phelan had his mind made up about the major allegations and conclusions of his article from the very beginning, and his major purpose was to viciously attack and castigate Warren Commission critics. His article does not discuss the many areas of quite reasonable doubt that had been raised by many intelligent, sincere individuals about various aspects of the J.F.K. assassination and the subsequent investigation. Rather, it begins with a series of statements that set forth conclusions drawn by the Warren Commission without any attempt to challenge the thoroughness and accuracy of those conclusions. For example, he states that "the three doctors who performed the autopsy on Kennedy testified that the two shots that hit him came from behind and above him—from the direction of the Book Depository." Those pathologists completely missed the presence of a bullet hole in the President's throat at the time they performed the autopsy, and they never dissected the bullet track through the President's body. How can their statements be afforded the dignity of a final unassailable medical conclusion?

I spent several hours with Mr. Phelan in numerous phone calls and I also sent him various materials, including photographs with captions. The Times had room in its article for all kinds of pictures, but it ran out of space when it came time to reprint the composite bullet photo [see below] which clearly demonstrates that the single-bullet theory is a forensic scientific farce. And yet Mr. Phelan has the audacity to write: "Dr. Wecht emphasizes that point in arguing that the single-bullet theory is untenable. For the bullet to have suffered so little damage is improbable. But it is not impossible." It *is* impossible, and the composite photo with the caption data that I sent him would have demonstrated that point to your readers. Of course, that is why the Warren Commission members and staff who were aware of the findings depicted in this composite photo in 1964, and Mr. Phelan in his journalistic research and investigation for this article, obviously had to ignore it in order to maintain the credibility of the single-bullet theory.

CARL H. WECHT, M.D., J.D.
Coroner, County of Allegheny
Pittsburgh



Comparisons: (1) Bullet which inflicted the wounds in President Kennedy's upper back and throat and all of Governor Connally's wounds; (2) two test bullets fired into cotton wadding; (3) one fired into an animal carcass to simulate Connally's chest wound; (4) one fired through a cadaver's wrist to simulate Connally's wrist wound; (5) one recovered from Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker's Dallas residence after an April 1963 attempt on his life. All test bullets were fired from Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano rifle. And the other two?

James Phelan replies:

Dr. Wecht's letter follows a syndrome many of the Warren critics display; if one does not agree with their passionately held beliefs, one must be part of a conspiracy. He does not fault the accuracy of my article but simply impugns my motives. His rejection of the single-bullet theory is widely known and quoted. I did not "dismiss" his opinion but summarized it and pointed out that Jacob Cohen, examining the same photographs, came to an opposing conclusion. I am not irrevocably convinced that either is necessarily right ■

NY TIMES MAGAZINE 1-4-76